

## Baltimore Sun

### Ulman says CSX facility won't go to Elkridge

O'Malley resists calls to remove site from consideration

By **Larry Carson**, The Baltimore Sun

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A proposed \$150 million CSX train cargo transfer facility the state considers vital to Baltimore's port won't be built in Elkridge, according to Howard County Executive Ken Ulman, but Gov. Martin O'Malley is resisting calls from residents to remove the community from a list of four possible sites.

"I've been very clear to CSX and Maryland Department of Transportation that I will only support a site if it has no impact on existing neighborhoods," Ulman said this week. "This [Elkridge] site is not going to happen. ... I've made my concerns abundantly clear to the governor's office."

Ulman added that another site in Howard County, north of Montevideo Road in Jessup, "could make some sense." A third site is on state-owned land next to a state prison in Jessup, and a fourth is in Prince George's County.

Ulman and others said they support the project's goals of boosting shipping and rail business at the port of Baltimore as a way to help the area's economy, but cautioned that it should not interfere with communities.

Despite Ulman's stance and strong support for the residents from local elected officials, including state Senate Budget and Tax Committee Chairman Edward J. Kasemeyer and County Councilwoman Courtney Watson, O'Malley is backing his transportation officials.

The governor "understands the county's concerns," O'Malley spokesman Rick Abbruzzese said. "We're going to let the public process play out."

The residents are right to express their feelings he added, because "they're taking full advantage of the public process." Residents remain angry, especially because a CSX affiliate has already bought two small parcels of land in Elkridge at the Hanover Road site.

State transportation officials have said the list of sites could be narrowed to two by summer, but that's not reassuring to Elkridge residents who fear that their community might be one of the finalists. The project will use huge cranes to

move large steel cargo containers, stacking them two-high on westbound trains or hauling them off on big-rig trucks. Residents think that the facility will be a noisy, polluting, 24-hour-a-day operation that will clog nearby roads and perhaps delay county plans to build a new school.

On Wednesday night, well over 200 area residents opposed to putting the facility along the Camden main line at Hanover and Race roads drove past lines of red "Stop Intermodal Now!" signs to get to Elkridge Landing Middle School. It was by far the largest crowd at any of three state transportation informational meetings on the project, officials said. The residents filled out scores of question cards that will become part of the official nine- to 12-month federal evaluation process.

"To me, that's success. That's the goal," said [Howard Johnson](#), the president of the Greater Elkridge Community Association, which is leading the protest. "We want them to understand they have an impact."

Inside the school gym, CSX and [Maryland](#) officials displayed 41 large information placards and video displays offering information about the project, along with employees who listened to complaints and answered questions, but residents seemed unimpressed.

"It's propaganda," said John Straumanis, who said he can see the train tracks from his home. "They're telling us it's not that bad."

Laura Johnson, Howard Johnson's wife, agreed. "It's 365 homeowners who just give it up for the greater good?" she asked Bradley Smith, a state worker who stood listening. "If you lived here, what do you think the impact would be? Do you really need a site plan to figure it out?" she asked, giving him little chance to answer.

Residents, led by Howard Johnson's group, are upset that, although there are 365 homes within a quarter-mile of the site in Elkridge, and far fewer if any homes at other sites, state officials are still unwilling to rule the site out.

The next-nearest site, north of Montevideo Road in Howard, has 21 homes within a quarter-mile, and a third site, next to a state prison in Jessup in [Anne Arundel County](#), has no homes. The fourth site is in Beltsville on heavily forested, federally owned land at the Beltsville Agricultural Research Center. An industrial park sits across the tracks, though some townhouses are northwest of the site. State transportation officials have said that all four sites have the basic requirements for accommodating a rectangular 70-acre site near highways and next to the main Camden Line tracks.

The cargo transfer station is part of the state's and the railroad's plan to keep Baltimore's harbor at the forefront of East Coast shipping ports with access to the Midwest. Currently, 40-foot-long metal containers are taken off ships and placed on rail cars at the [Dundalk](#) Marine terminal. But plans are moving forward to widen the Panama Canal to enable larger ships carrying more containers to move from Asia to the [Atlantic Ocean](#).

That additional volume will require double-stacking the containers on rail cars, which can't be done in Baltimore because the city's antiquated Howard Street railroad tunnel is too small. A transfer station south of the tunnel that could stack the containers or haul them off in trucks for local distribution would solve the problem.

If the Elkridge site is not off the list by June, the county school board is also likely to delay plans to build a new elementary school next to [Coca Cola Drive](#), which would be the major connection between the cargo station site and Route 100. If that 20-acre site isn't used, the school would likely be delayed at least one year. Transportation officials were to present their traffic studies to the school board Thursday night to further their contention that the school and the cargo station could co-exist.